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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PERSONAL EQUATION IN THE MINISTRY

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Any man who is ready to think steadily about the church will sooner or later face the question of the ministry. What sort of person should the minister be? What sort of tasks should he try to get his church to accomplish? How shall the church be induced to become as effective as it ought to be? Dr. Price undertakes to answer some of these questions from the point of view of actual experiment and experience.

By personal equation in this paper is meant the temperamental bias or complex of gifts, innate, or cultivated up to the time when a person chooses some phase of the Christian ministry as his particular life-calling. By ministry is meant any calling to which one gives himself in the service of the Christian spirit, whether in the organized church or in any of its institutional features. While the point of departure in the mind of the writer is the demand that the individual fitness for a special type of ministry should be considered before that type of ministry is adopted, the paper leads afield until it may as well be called a plea for a specialized ministry with a consequent plea for church unity.

The subject of personality in the ministry has been widely discussed for the last two decades, but thus far the writer has not been able to find any careful discussion of the problem of the personal equation as it relates itself to the various phases of the ministry. Personality is a variable quantity. A man may have a strong personality as a teacher but not as an occupant of the pulpit. There may be a personality which is strong in the drawing-room but

which is wholly lacking in the classroom. For this reason a discussion of personality is not pertinent to the problem in the writer's mind, while the personal equation or personal fitness has much to do with ministerial efficiency from any point of view.

The matter in hand will be discussed under three principal propositions. The endeavor will be made to show, first, that in response to larger demands on the part of society, and by reason of a larger theology of the church, there has come a decided widening of the sphere of the church and thus of the Christian ministry in recent years; secondly, that as the result of this widening, owing to the limitations of human nature, there must be, and there has already begun, a rapid differentiation of function, so that new and distinct fields of endeavor for different ministerial professions are being created; thirdly, that the scientific study of the religious experience and life, together with the new knowledge of the laws of the social complex in which this religious life is lived, has made the selection and training of men for these varying tasks or functions a safe and certain course for the church.

1. Though it may seem to some unnecessary to spend much time to show that the modern church field is widening, let us get before us the facts as they appear in real life. The usual church of today will be found to be at about the same stage of development as that of the country store a generation ago. This store aimed to serve all the needs of its community in the line of merchandise, from a paper of pins to a self-binding harvester—drugs, dry-goods, millinery, and all the rest. Today, in a city with a population of 10,000, there will be found to be at least a score of churches, each with a minister who is doing the same type of work that all the rest are doing—preaching, visiting, organizing, teaching, and engaging in community work. Even with these twenty country stores, to continue the figure, two-thirds of the people are still unreached; the classes are poorly served by two or three of them, while the masses are partially ministered to by the rest. Though these are groups of devoted, self-sacrificing people who are the salt of the city's life, the outstanding features are a struggle for existence and a total lack of efficiency. There is not one good pulpit man in the group; there is not an educator; there is not a first-class administrator. Religious and spiritual mediocrity characterizes pastors and people.

Yet this is the religious system which Protestantism has devised or, rather, which has grown up out of historical situations which need not be discussed here. Our only problem is how to improve on the system. If we look about us we find that the lawyer who used to cover the whole field of law, and still does so in backward communities, is

now a member of a firm of lawyers where each man limits himself to certain narrow fields of law. The physician, who a generation ago professed to doctor the entire physical man, has now confined himself to surgery or some small branch of surgery, or to some one class of diseases which attack individual organs. If we note civil government, we find that it has become a greatly differentiated affair, whereas a generation or two ago a simple town meeting decided the important issues and the government seemed to run itself. The churches of today find themselves living as part of this same complex of civilization. They are dealing with the same people who are accustomed to specialized service in law, medicine, government, and business. The general store does not satisfy them, nor does the general practitioner. Is it any wonder that an institution which remains on the basis of the country store of their childhood, an institution in which one person is doing many things, and all of them badly, fails to appeal to the typical individual of today; and is there any wonder that this institution seems to him like a remnant of an older civilization, if not like a vermiform appendix in a social system?

The city or village church and pastor have for a long time heard the criticisms going up from the public platform and the public press. Demands like these have been made vocal from many sources: "Make your educational system of the church modern. Give the adolescent boy and girl special attention, for this is the period for deepest religious impressions. Provide something beside commercialized amusement for our young people. What is the church for?

Teach us the truth about social problems which we must decide at the ballot box. Get behind the great enterprise of world missions; it is the church's business. Community betterment needs the backing of the church. Temperance and health crusades are as much a part of Christianity as a revival meeting. If you expect us to go to church, the religious music must be of as high quality as that which we hear in the concert hall. The workingmen are getting away from the church and need special attractions, for they are gathering in groups of thousands about our factories which have sprung up in a night. Housing conditions are bad and commercialized greed will do nothing for them." These are a few of the many calls which sound today in the ears of the modern church, and they are voices which must be heeded if our civilization is to remain. These appeals are all fundamentally altruistic, and where shall we look for motive and for propelling power but in the confessedly altruistic institution of society? Not only should the church uncomplainingly respond to this widening appeal, but it should rejoice in the opportunity to demonstrate the spirit and the power of Christian service. The church of today cannot ignore nor escape from these new tasks and keep its soul. There is no other institution that can furnish both the platform for reaching the people and the motive power to make the appeal effective.

Let us turn to the other point of view. If it be true that the church has a new theology and, as William Adams Brown has said, that the new theology is only "an attempt to realize all that the old gospel means," that the exhibition of

love in concrete ways and the application of scientific truth for the welfare of the people are only the carrying out of this new theology in life, and if the organic expression of this gospel is the Kingdom of God and the church only a means to this end—then the enlargement of the church's function must inevitably follow. The church has something to do besides devoting itself to the saving of individual souls and providing a fellowship and a cult for them. Hence, from both sides, namely, from the point of view of society, which instinctively looks to the church for a larger ministry—an external compulsion—and from the point of view of its own theology, which is an internal compulsion, the church of today must recognize a greatly increased field for its endeavors, and it must frankly face the situation and either adjust itself to the new day or take its place among the myriad forms of life which, unable to change with changing conditions, have marked with death the wayside of history.

2. The result of this widening, owing to the very limitations of human nature, is a rapid differentiation of function. These new and distinct functions call for different methods and for personalities especially gifted and trained to fulfil them. It requires no argument to prove that no pastor is sufficient for all of these things. The preacher has been called a prophet, but no prophet can sit six days a week as an executive or as a captain of industry and exercise a prophet's function in the pulpit upon Sunday. I quote from an article which recently appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly*:

The faces one sees at a clerical gathering are an interesting commentary on the change

of emphasis which modern conditions have forced upon the Christian ministry. One sees there the faces of men of action, rather than of thought, types of the engineer or banker, the lawyer or promoter, rather than the mystic or philosopher or even teacher. They have been made by their tasks. The first work of the minister is still to preach. He is the interpreter of the will of God to man. In theory at least, it is his task to comfort and inspire, to guide, to strengthen and warn. But he has been forced by pressure of circumstances to place the emphasis in his work elsewhere. He must make it go. He must interest everybody by devising something for each to do, and each short-lived activity must be quickly followed by another; else the members drift away. Instead of studying the will of God, he is forever prodding the wills of men. All this he does often in the face of his own conviction that these are not the things that count. . . . The average minister lives the life of an executive officer and the absorbing passion of the prophet has no time to gather strength. . . . It is for the church to choose whether she will be guided by prophets or engineers.

While this may seem to be an exaggeration, it does express a part of the truth. It is not, however, a choice between prophets or engineers, but a case of prophets and engineers, if the church is to go forward.

Now and then there remains a great preacher, but in most cases it will be found that either the new appeals which have been mentioned above are ignored and the sermons preached to an increasingly small and esoteric portion of the community, or the functions of the churches of these particular pastors are differentiated and assigned to specialists who relieve the preacher of the largest part of the work of the church. It is

from this direction that relief is to come.

Some preachers are turning over the educational work of the church to specialists trained for this task, though, out of two hundred thousand churches in the United States, probably less than one in a thousand have as yet come to this. Here is a task that imperatively needs to be set off as a profession requiring special training and special gifts, and yet it is a part of the Christian ministry, and a most fundamental part. If we are ever to treat religion as a serious matter and subject to the same laws of growth that other human interests are under, we must make men Christian by the educational process and not by the revival process. It is as necessary, in order to have a well-developed adult Christian, to instruct him in the Christian doctrine by sound pedagogic method in his youth as it is to start a child early in music if he is to make a ripened musician. The old-fashioned Sunday school could be carried on by laymen without training, inasmuch as it was a parrot-like, standardized performance that ignored the individual needs and sought to honor the Bible rather than to reverence the human being. There is no doubt in the writer's mind that the first line of differentiation is that between preaching and teaching, though this must be a more or less conventional arrangement, inasmuch as the true preacher is a teacher, and vice versa. In communities where churches are not willing to specialize further, one educational director for all the Sunday schools is a possibility to be realized not far in the future.

The business department of a modern church is one which demands a vast amount of purely administrative and clerical work. To finance a large religious plant by the method of voluntary gifts, the collection and the distribution of funds, sometimes amounting to far more than the budget of a denominational college, requires business talent of a high order. The care of properties, the purchase of supplies, the making of contracts, the superintending of improvements—all this when done by committees and boards often entails wastage which would, if conserved, finance the office of controller. To be rid of this sort of care would release the energies of the pastor for other and more vital work for which his training is supposed to have fitted him. The purely clerical work of a modern church is a vast amount of detail which can easily occupy the full time of a capable secretary who should be skilled in the task of dealing with people, a bureau of information, and a confidential adviser on many subjects.

But this is not all. It is demanded that the music of the church shall be something beside the performance of a well-paid quartet on Sunday morning. If it be true that music has religious values which the Protestant church has not as yet begun to appreciate, we cannot too soon begin systematic instruction in church music, beginning in the kindergarten, with a curriculum adapted to the various grades of the Sunday school. This curriculum should be such that the great church music of the ages would become a part of the equipment of each graduate of the church school. A minister of music to whom this task should

be turned over would help to solidify, spiritualize, and edify congregations. Given a people who sing together the great compositions of the church from childhood to adulthood, and we have a people who are grounded in the cultural elements of the faith and well started on the road toward character building.

What shall the church do with the whole program of social service which a multitude of organizations are inviting it to participate in? There can be but one reply, if the church is to co-operate effectively in these enterprises, and that is to add to its staff of paid workers an expert who shall be the go-between of the church and the various civic, charitable, and reform organizations of community, state, and nation. Such a community minister would give particular attention to the friendly visiting work, co-operating with the associated charities, the medical and surgical clinics, the employment bureaus, and the civic committees. The whole recreational problem and the problem of temperance would be his to investigate, and upon them he should bring to bear the energies of the individual and of the collective church.

These are a few of the differentiated functions that are now taking concrete form in the evolution of the modern church. If someone should say that the recognition and provision for them is only a distant ideal for the church at large, let us remind ourselves that the pioneering has been begun. When once established and demonstrated in a few places, the principle will rapidly be applied in places of greatest need. Take as an instance a small community of a thousand people where there are four

churches and four pastors. When, by Christian comity, the pressure from higher up is relieved, these four institutions can be slowly and safely merged and carried on by specially trained men, one for the pulpit, one for teaching, one for community work, and one for administration. The whole community is thus appealed to and twice as many homes and individuals ministered to, and more effectively, than at the present time. As it is, most of our pastors are already specializing on a task which requires general, all-around work. One is strong in the pulpit only and scarcely knows his Sunday-school teachers; another is a money-raiser, but lacks religious fervor; a fourth is doing real educational work but preaching to empty pews; a fifth is out in politics and community life but has had to give up his prayer-meeting; a sixth runs the choir and sings solos, but cannot get his salary paid.

A superficial glance at any group of churches such as that described above—and the latter is typical—will show how the personal equation is involved. All of these pastors have special fitnesses which are evident, but which may not safely be exercised. All are attempting the undifferentiated tasks of the ministry and all are failing. All are living below the line of personal efficiency for lack of salary. If a church might be provided with functions clean-cut, with proper superintendence, each man would be a success, working out his own gifts in his own particular field; and, altogether, vastly greater work for the Kingdom would be achieved, especially if each man were trained along the line of his own individual gifts. What a Sunday school that one man could conduct if he

had proper support, and nothing else to do! What an administrative department this pastor could conduct if he were unhampered with other things! What a power in the community as a social worker this pastor might become, what a preacher-evangelist this other one! It is easy to imagine the result as a civilized, socialized, Christianized community heading up in a great church which would be a source of inspiration to the educational, domestic, civic, industrial, and social life of the community. In it scientific work would be done; a systematic care would be given to the religious life of every child; the recreational life of the community would be made to elevate and not to degrade; money would be saved, and the great aggressive enterprises of the Kingdom would be set forward by this well-organized, well-equipped Christian institution.

It might be noted in passing that the hesitancy of the local church to move in the direction of specialization which would demand either larger financial outlay or closer co-operation with other churches, or even organic union with them, has given rise to such movements as the Christian Associations, with their work for young people—the boys and girls—rescue missions, and various welfare agencies which, with their secretaryships, invite many earnest candidates for Christian service into their respective fields of labor.

3. A scientific study of religious experience and life, together with the knowledge of the social complex within which this religious life is lived, has made possible the adoption of scientific methods, and made the selection and training of men for these varying tasks

or functions a safe and sane course for the church.

Of all the revolutionizing discoveries of the modern world, none will ultimately prove more far-reaching in its good effect than the discovery that when we are working in the religious field we are not working without law, but with laws that are as certain in their operations as those which the gardener, the farmer, the artist, or the machinist observes. At one time a minister's success was supposed to be dependent upon a certain mysterious quality of spirituality and upon his possession of the Holy Spirit, a condition which could not be understood, regulated, or defined. His success was a question outside the realm of knowledge or of calculation. The study of the psychology of the religious life has rendered sufficiently clear the laws of religious pedagogy and the nature of religious development to justify a large degree of dependence upon the scientific methods of the institutions of organized religion. Given certain factors in the causes, certain results can be counted on as definitely as in other realms of life, allowance being made always for certain uncontrollable elements. We know, for instance, that most human beings as we find them are religious and are appealed to by the symbols and truths of religion. We know that religious truth, to beget religious character, is best imparted in early life by warm religious personality. We know that the inner life of thought and feeling is largely molded by the outer life of persons and things. We know that as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he. We know that religion without intelligence degenerates into fanaticism,

if not into superstition, and that intelligence without religious emotion tends to become pessimism and coldness. We know that social service without a motive ever refreshed from the inner fountains of religion becomes calculating prudence or social fad. We know that individualism in religion needs to be supplemented by social practice, to keep the religion sane and wholesome. We know that there are laws of conversion, of religious growth, of organized effort, of religious symbolism, and of propagation. We have faith that a sane preaching of the word, a faithful teaching of religion, and earnest, unselfish living in any community, plus service for that community, bring results as surely as the action of any material laws brings results. To proceed on this basis is to confide in the integrity and righteousness of God. It is to follow the example of Him who went about doing good, never seeming anxious for converts, but always anxious to do the Father's will. This attitude toward the religious life makes possible and rational the division of labor which must follow upon the enlargement of the church's field. No one man, even if it were not for human physical limitations, could master the scientific details of these various kinds of work. In the realm of the physical, this inevitable law of specialization has yielded astonishing results in heaping up riches and enlarging life for us all. If it be feared lest in so much division of labor the personality be lost, the reply is that personality for the first time will have a fair chance to be used.

What about the training of candidates for these new specialized tasks? This is as necessary as is the training of

the preaching minister. The business minister of the church should have the same fundamental training as his co-workers, that he may know the real nature, problems, and genius of his institution. He will be taught to remember that there is an element here not found in the usual business transaction. God is here in the emotional life, in reverence, faith, and the hope of his children; and this Unseen Factor is one of the largest elements in his business administration. The educational director should be taught the genius of religious education and its difference in method from that of the public schools, for his work is to mold character through religion, that subtle, evasive thing which is conveyed through personality, and established and strengthened through instruction and expression. The minister of music is to be not a mere music teacher, but a minister of religion through rhythm, tone, and word, and he is to sing and play the deepest truths far into the emotional life of the people. The social worker, while not primarily a propagandist, will be taught to do his work in the spirit of the Christ, with a motive that is unquestionable and a method that is scientific, leaving his work when done as his own justification. If one of the cleansed lepers returns to the church for inquiry, let him rejoice that one has been led to seek the higher thing in the only possible way, namely, by ten having been healed. In connection with all of these, the fundamental requisite is the religious experience and motive. Given this and the personal equation, the technical preparation should add notably to their respective equipments.

If the diagnosis above is approximately correct, are we not compelled to

face the problem of church unity as a necessity in carrying out this program? This unity may not be organic at first, but must be of the spirit, and a common zeal for the Kingdom must supplant the zeal for denominational glory.

To recapitulate and then to suggest a brief program: From three and even four directions comes the same clear call to the church to differentiate its functions and in providing a ministry to seek to fit the individual to his particular place: first, from the direction of a helpless society needing the healing, inspiring, guiding power of the church in a larger realm than has been covered heretofore; secondly, on the part of a theology which, as a result of its effort to realize the whole gospel, has recognized the whole of man and of society as a subject for redemption, and consequently demands an extension of interest and activities in its working out; thirdly, from the candidate for the ministry who, because of a temperamental bias or his personal equation, cannot efficiently perform all these various functions of the church; and fourthly, from the local church which instinctively would respond to all the various demands upon its resources. The modern pastor is between the millstones. Here is one with gifts for preaching, but he sees the task and is conscientious; he cannot specialize. He would like to preach or teach or write or organize or serve his community. He cannot do one of these well without neglecting others. The disgrace of failure in some is not to be overcome by success in another. Mediocrity is his only alternative. From what direction is relief to come—and can it come in time to save the modern church to its greater task?

Would it be presumptuous to propose a program to begin on?

1. Let the leaders of the church get together and agree to put the Kingdom of God above the church. This will mean less emphasis upon ecclesiastical statistics. It will mean taking off the pressure from those underneath whose showing of record depends upon figures. It may mean, to many an organization, losing its life in order to save it. Let them encourage communities which are ready to attempt federation. Let them provide machinery for superintending and linking up federation experiments with larger bodies, remembering that isolation has been the death of union efforts. Let them make a study of federations and unions already existent and give wide publicity to their findings. The denominational press can help here by turning denominational attention toward the larger thing. Laymen's organizations which are interdenominational can become a mighty factor.

2. Let the training schools provide curricula for the specialized training of men and women, and, so far as they may be able, place the calling of educational, musical, social, and administrative ministry on a par with that of the preaching ministry, and let them seek as candidates men who are temperamentally equipped for these places. Let them offer vocational guidance in colleges and seminaries, and render all possible aid to men in choosing and finding places in their life-work. Where five men would enter the ministry with five varying gifts, let the schools direct these five men, on the basis of careful scientific study of the individuals, into five spheres of special service.

3. Let the pastors now in the field hold before the churches this ideal of the division of labor, showing the need of making provision for specialized functions. Here will come the speediest results. The laymen of our day are ready for these federated movements. They are for the most part not devoted to denominational shibboleths. Denominational zeal has largely departed from the rank and file of the local church. A business layman readily sees the advantage of applying in the church a principle which he has long used in his business.

Shall we lose anything? Without doubt, yes. Something was lost when the general store went out of business to be succeeded by the dozen specialized stores. The keeper exchanged his general knowledge for a specialized one. The customer had to walk farther to do his shopping. But we shall gain much. Just to conserve human efficiency by providing an adequate place for the exercise of each particular gift will be an immeasurable gain. All that a division of labor has wrought in other spheres can be as confidently expected here. In religion, we claim as a fundamental principle the sacrifice of the lesser for the greater good. To choose the lesser good is to choose the wrong. Nothing but the best can satisfy the Christian. If it be claimed that Jesus was a preacher, social worker, and executive, let us remember that it was he also who rebuked the disciples for not discerning the signs of the times, and that he said that the scribe who became a disciple of the Kingdom brought out of his storehouse things new and old.